

MEDIA RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OLDER PEOPLE FROM MULTICULTURAL BACKGROUNDS AT RISK OF LOSING HOMES

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Seniors Rights Service was recognised at this year's Zest Award for the organisation's outstanding work in community partnership and collaboration with Legal Aid NSW for the 2015 Borrowers Beware Project.

Borrowers Beware uses community radio to educate elderly people from Arabic, Croatian, Serbian and Macedonian speaking communities on the dangers of borrowing money against their home for the benefit of their children.

Following extensive community consultation more than 1,300 awareness raising radio advertisements were broadcast on SBS Radio and eight other community radio stations in all four languages. Translated interviews with Seniors Rights Service solicitors were also broadcast in each language. The radio ads had a potential reach of more than 500,000 people. All stations that aired the ads received overwhelming positive feedback from the relevant communities – hence their interest in keeping the campaign alive over several sustained months.

Diana Bernard, Manager of Education and Promotion at Seniors Rights Service said: "The issue of older people gifting or guaranteeing their homes for their adult children can sometimes leave the older person stripped of assets and potentially homeless. Our project aimed to inform people from these particular communities of the potential risks due to the high prevalence of these issues reported in these communities."

Bernard said: "It's essential people understand the potential risks involved with 'home gifting or guaranteeing' without seeking independent legal advice. We intend to continue shining a spotlight on this issue and will continue to target those most at risk."

Legal Aid NSW was Senior Rights Service' principal partner in this project. Lawyer Dana Beiglari, said: "By using radio – the main source of information for elderly people in these communities – we managed to overcome cultural barriers in regards to discussing money matters. These innovative ways to reach our target communities largely contributed to its success."

Russell Westacott, Chief Executive Officer of Seniors Rights Service said: "The project demonstrated that working closely with affected communities and collaborating with multiple agencies can yield effective results. More than 1,300 radio broadcasts was a fantastic success. We are proud that Zest acknowledged this achievement with their award. By receiving this award we can continue illuminating the risks of entering into financial arrangements without seeking advice to those communities most affected."

The Zest Awards showcase the great work of the Community Sector across Western Sydney. The awards promote a positive image of Greater Western Sydney region through highlighting the area's assets, its diversity and its creative and innovative work. NSW Premier, Mike Baird, is a patron of the Zest Awards.

Seniors Rights Service will continue to work in partnership with vulnerable communities throughout NSW and with Legal Aid NSW. The success of Borrowers Beware demonstrates that meaningful and considered collaboration can achieve positive impact in communities that are sometimes considered 'hard to reach'.

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